



From competence to confidence

**Practice guide for supporting
novice teachers in VET**

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Purpose

This resource guide outlines key conditions and support strategies that can assist novice teachers as they move from initial teacher training into teaching roles.

A one-page *Quick reference guide* based on this document is also available from the NCVER website.



Why supporting novice VET teachers is important

Pathways into VET teaching are diverse, with teachers entering the profession through a wide range of qualification and career pathways.

As a result, novice VET teachers bring varying levels of industry experience, teaching skills and life experience to their roles.

Initial teacher training does not always fully prepare teachers for the complexities of VET teaching. Many novice teachers report gaps in key areas such as teaching practice, classroom management, supporting diverse learners, and responding to psychosocial needs. Developing these capabilities is important for building confidence and effectiveness in the teaching role.

To support their transition into teaching, novice VET teachers often require additional support, including:

- Structured and staged onboarding, with a holistic focus
- Workload management, to enable time to further develop their skills
- Ongoing support (providing formal support and enabling informal support)
- Supportive leadership that provides a growth-focused culture
- Ongoing needs-based and meaningful professional development.





Support strategies for novice teachers

The transition from industry expert to effective VET educator is not always smooth or linear.

However, with the right supports and conditions — including structured induction, early classroom experience, purposeful mentoring, a growth-oriented culture, and opportunities to learn with and from peers — novice teachers can make this transition with greater confidence and develop their teaching capability.

Competency is the minimum benchmark; we need confident trainers who cope with diversity and behaviour. (Workshop participant)

If we don't help, then it can never be, people will never grow. Does that make sense? So, we'll just be seeing the same trainers that are coming out of TAE now. If we don't help and support, then it can never change. (Experienced teacher, NT)

Key conditions and support strategies for novice trainers

 Induction and onboarding	 Workload management	 Ongoing support	 Supportive leadership	 Ongoing professional development
• Structured and staged • Early engagement with relevant people and resources • Holistic – focused on organisational processes, teaching practice and individual teacher needs • Supported classroom access • Clear role expectations and wellbeing check-ins	• Allowing time for reflection and professional learning • Staged/delayed teaching responsibility • Designated non-contact time for lesson preparation, reflection and professional learning • Careful allocation of learner groups	• Formal and informal • Mentoring, buddying, shadowing, team teaching, communities of practice • Enabling peer support	• Supportive of teacher development (including teaching skills) • Providing a safe and encouraging culture, focused on growth • Setting clear expectations – responsibilities and boundaries of role • Developing agency in novice teachers	• Needs based • Addressing initial teacher training gaps • Contextualised and meaningful professional learning



Induction & onboarding

New VET teachers require structured support to successfully transition into their teaching roles.

Like new students, they often have limited understanding of organisational processes, available support services, key contacts, and expectations of the role. Training providers should implement structured, staged and holistic induction and onboarding processes that support both organisational integration and teaching capability development.

The induction has been an absolute game changer because we really connect them with the right people from the get-go... and that has really helped us identify if there's going to be any additional supports required. (Teacher Development Coordinator, Vic.)

While induction and onboarding approaches will vary depending on organisational context, size, resources and operating model, effective programs share several common features that help novice teachers build confidence, capability and connections within the organisation. These features are outlined below.



Purpose

- ✓ Ongoing, staged and holistic onboarding is more effective than one-off information sessions
- ✓ Helps ensure new teachers are not left to navigate the organisation alone and enables leaders and support staff to identify early where additional support may be needed.
- ✓ The onboarding period also helps build an educator mindset in novice teachers.



Examples

- ✓ **Early engagement with relevant people and resources**
Information about available teacher and learner support services, resources and key contacts.
- ✓ **Orientation to organisational systems, processes and RTO standards**
Orientation to organisational systems including the Learning Management System, internal compliance requirements and processes.
- ✓ **Supervisor and mentor support**
Allocation of a supervisor and/or mentor, with a dedicated point of contact for support and guidance.
- ✓ **Observation and supported classroom access**
Opportunities to observe experienced teachers and gain early, supported access to classrooms.
- ✓ **Clear role expectations and boundaries**
Recognition that novice trainers are not expected to be expert teachers immediately.
- ✓ **Wellbeing check-ins**
Regular wellbeing conversations that recognise the personal and professional transition into a VET teaching role.



Key Outcomes

- ✓ New teachers feel welcome, informed and supported from the start
- ✓ Connections are established with the right people and resources
- ✓ Challenges and support needs are identified early
- ✓ Strong foundation for ongoing professional growth and development



Workload management

Managing workload is a key enabler for novice teachers.

Participants emphasised the importance of protecting the learning and development space of new teachers by reducing their teaching load, particularly for those who are simultaneously completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Participants suggested that this approach provides novice teachers with time for lesson preparation, reflection, classroom/teaching observation, and engagement in mentoring or support activities, rather than expecting them to operate at full teaching capacity while they are still learning how to teach.

I can see that, in a new educator's development, they develop so much more quickly and they're more confident in their ability in the classroom, because they've been afforded that time upfront. (Experienced teacher, ACT)

"...3 months 'breathing room' after commencing, before facing my first class, coupled with a 'trainers toolkit' – an online module taking me through preparation for my 'first class'." (Workshop participant, NT)



Purpose

- ✓ A key enabler for novice teachers.
- ✓ Protects time and space for learning, reflection and professional growth.



Examples

- ✓ Reduced class contact hours.
- ✓ Careful allocation of student groups and learner complexity.
- ✓ Fewer units and student cohorts.
- ✓ Designated non-contact time for lesson preparation and professional learning.



Key Outcomes

- ✓ More time to develop teaching capability.
- ✓ Reduced workload pressure during transition.
- ✓ Greater confidence in teaching practice.
- ✓ Stronger foundation for long-term success.



Ongoing support

Both formal and informal supports, ideally established during the onboarding process, are highly valued mechanisms of novice teacher capability development.

Mentoring, buddying, shadowing, and team teaching were identified as powerful forms of support for novice teachers when they were Structured and intentionally designed. Participants emphasised that effective mentoring involved more than simply sharing knowledge. It required ongoing connection and commitment to the growth of the new teacher, including support to develop problem-solving skills, reflective practice, and emotional resilience. A positive attitude and approach of the mentor or experienced

teacher was seen as critical to achieving helpful outcomes.

New lecturers now require... mentors at the start... setting them up at the start. Encouraging professional development at the start of their career is very worthwhile at the end. (Mid-career teacher, WA)

If you're with a really good educator that has really strong values, then it's awesome. But if you're with an educator that has a negative view on the corporation, or they're not very involved in the teaching and they're doing it as an on-the-side kind of thing... it can hinder you as a new educator cause you're gonna learn bad habits. (Novice teacher, Qld)



Mentoring

Structured and growth-focused

Purpose

- More than knowledge sharing - it builds connection, confidence and capability.
- Ongoing connection and commitment to the growth of the new teacher.
- Supports problem-solving, reflective practice and emotional resilience.

Examples

- Dedicated mentor from day one with regular check-ins.
- Two complementary mentors (e.g. teaching development + same teaching area).
- Trained mentors with dedicated time and recognition.

Outcomes

- Stronger teaching capability.
- Greater confidence and clarity.
- Improved problem-solving and reflection.
- Increased resilience and wellbeing.



Buddying, shadowing, team teaching & communities of practice

Learn together, Grow together.

Purpose

- Highly effective for building confidence and classroom management skills.
- Learn through real-time observation and collaboration.
- Gradual increase in responsibility within a supportive environment.

Examples

- Shadowing experienced teachers.
- Team teaching.
- Communities of practice for shared learning and reflection.

Outcomes

- Stronger classroom practice.
- More confidence in lesson delivery.
- Stronger teaching identity.
- Supported professional growth.



Enabling peer support

Collegial, collaborative and empowering

Purpose

- Novice teachers value learning from and with colleagues.
- Sharing resources, ideas and experiences builds confidence and capability.
- Peer connections create a sense of belonging and support.

Examples

- Peer-driven teaching and learning groups.
- Peer observation and feedback.
- Sharing lesson plans and resources.
- Informal connections (open workspaces, team lunches, online networks)

Outcomes

- Stronger sense of belonging.
- Shared learning and resources.
- Improved practice through collaboration.
- A culture of collegial support.



Supportive leadership

Supportive leadership plays an important role in helping new teachers succeed, including fostering a supportive culture, setting clear expectations and responsibilities, and encouraging a growth mindset.

It's okay to make mistakes... There is no such thing as stupid questions - ask anything and everything... Don't be scared to jump in and give it a go. (Workshop participant, Tas.)



Purpose

- ✓ Supports teacher development (including teaching skills).
- ✓ Creates a safe and encouraging culture, focused on growth.
- ✓ Sets clear expectations about responsibilities and boundaries of role.
- ✓ Develops agency in novice teachers.



Building supportive culture



Leaders understand and support

Leaders understand the challenges novice teachers face and actively support their development.



A safe culture for growth

When leaders and experienced teachers model that learning from mistakes is normal, novice teachers feel safe to ask questions and grow.

Supportive Leaders:



Model vulnerability



Promote reflective practice



Are open to feedback



Setting expectations



Provide role clarity and set clear organisational expectations so new teachers can navigate the transition into teaching with confidence.



Communicate expectations through **regular, structured check-ins** — not assumptions or informal conversations.

Examples

- Weekly or fortnightly check-ins in the first semester or year.
- Use check-ins for meaningful development conversations
- Use a framework or learning plan to clarify daily expectations.



Developing teacher agency

- ✓ Proactive teachers who take responsibility for their own development build capability and resilience quickly.
- ✓ A growth mindset and sense of professional agency can be strengthened and encouraged by leaders.

Self-directed strategies leaders can encourage

Seek mentors or supportive colleagues

Observe experienced teachers

Request feedback or additional induction

Use reflective practice to improve

Seek student feedback proactively

Build professional networks early

Supportive leadership creates the conditions for growth, clarity and confidence.



Ongoing Professional Development

Professional learning should begin as teachers enter their teaching roles.

Targeted and ongoing professional development can help address capability gaps left by initial teacher training, particularly during the early years of teaching.

There's lots of professional development... Zoom sessions... but PD is mostly what's available, not driven by what we think needs to be spoken about.
(Novice teacher, Qld)

Ongoing professional development needs to be:

- ✓ **Meaningful**
- ✓ **Targeted**
- ✓ **Needs based**
(responsive to the needs of new teachers)



Prioritising professional learning that strengthens classroom confidence is very important in helping new teachers feel capable and supported in their roles.

Novice teachers commonly need professional development in:



Teaching strategies and student engagement
Including how to plan and deliver engaging, student-centred learning.



Reflective practice
Including not only the expectation to reflect, but how to do so meaningfully.



Classroom management and responding to psychosocial needs of learners



Emotional intelligence and wellbeing



Supporting diverse learners
Including learners with disability, ADHD, autism, CALD backgrounds, and First Nations learners.



AI literacy
Including understanding how AI tools can be used within teaching contexts.



Digital literacy and LMS use



Educator identity and mindset
Supporting industry experts to develop a teaching identity alongside their vocational expertise.



Time and workload management



Needs often emerge through real challenges

Professional development needs often emerge through day-to-day teaching challenges. Learning is frequently self-identified and self-directed, with limited structured guidance.



**Make it relevant.
Make it accessible.
Make it effective.**

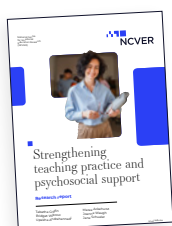
Professional development is most effective when it is contextualised to the teacher's field of practice and delivered in accessible, engaging formats — not through generic modules disconnected from classroom realities.

Meaningful, targeted, needs-based professional learning builds capability, confidence and long-term success for new teachers.

Information and additional resources

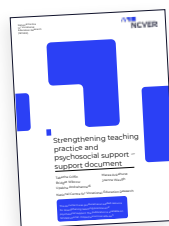
This practice guide is one of several resources developed through the research project *Strengthening Teaching Practice and Psychosocial Support*. The project involved extensive consultation with VET teachers and other VET professionals through a national survey, semi-structured interviews, and workshops conducted across Australia.

These activities informed a suite of practical resources for VET teachers and training providers.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Research report

Research findings on teaching practice and psychosocial challenges in the VET sector.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Support document

Includes some additional supporting evidence related to professional development and the importance of psychosocial support for teachers, as well as the initial literature review.



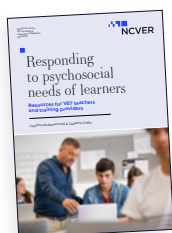
Strengthening teaching practices in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to strengthening teaching practices in VET.



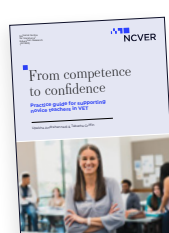
Understanding psychosocial challenges and support in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to the teacher experience of psychosocial challenges and how teachers can support psychosocial needs.



Responding to psychosocial needs of learners: Resources for VET teachers and training providers

Resources to support VET teachers in recognising, responding to and referring learners for specialised support.



From competence to confidence: Practice guide for supporting novice teachers in VET + Quick reference guide

Key conditions and strategies for supporting novice teachers as they develop in their teaching roles.



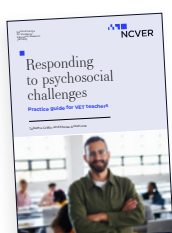
Managing psychosocial challenges in VET: Practice guide for training providers + Quick reference guide

Practical advice for training providers on supporting psychosocial needs in learners and teacher wellbeing.



Developing the educator mindset in VET: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Explores the importance of developing and sustaining an educator mindset in VET.



Responding to psychosocial challenges: Practice guide for VET teachers + Quick reference guide

A guide for VET teachers on recognising, responding to and supporting learners experiencing psychosocial challenges.



From professional learning to practice for VET teachers: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Effective approaches for embedding new teaching skills and sustaining improvements in practice.



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